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ABSTRACT

During the past three decades, there has been a growing concern for handicapped children and youth in Egypt. Current legislation recognizes the rights of the handicapped, and the Egyptian government supports the care, education, rehabilitation, and personal/social adjustment of handicapped citizens. The responsibility for the disabled is divided among the Ministry of Education (concerned with the education of blind and partially sighted, deaf and partially deaf, and mentally retarded); the Ministry of Social Affairs (which provides rehabilitation services to all disabled persons), the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Manpower. Many problems still need to be addressed in the educational system. The position of special education teacher is viewed as a less than desirable position, socially and economically, and many low-achieving students are urged to enter the field. Preschool assessment procedures do not exist; and the system for identifying exceptional school-age children is antiquated, relying on outdated instruments which often have invalid norms. Special instructional needs of handicapped students are often not considered. Services need to be developed for severely emotionally disturbed children, preschool handicapped children, and disabled adults. (JDD)

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SPECIAL EDUCATION

IN EGYPT AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Special education practices in Egypt are highlighted in this article. Problems, potential pitfalls, and future directions for teacher education are discussed. In addition, current educational programs which are available to children and youth who are handicapped are reviewed.

During the past three decades, there has been an obvious growing concern for the handicapped children and youth in Egypt. This concern was accompanied by a degree of change in society's attitudes toward its handicapped members and services offered for them.

Historically, two main stages characterize the development of attitudes toward the disabled child and adult: the first is pity and protection, and caring. This philosophy is rooted in the Egyptian and Islam culture. The second and current stage is marked by acceptance of the handicapped person and caring for them with a degree of integration into society.

Current legislation for the handicapped in Egypt accepts this later position and recognizes the right of the handicapped. Different branches of the Egyptian government (executive, judicial, and legislative) have supported the worth, caring of, education of, rehabilitation of, and personal-social adjustment for the handicapped citizens. There is a growing interest in and demand for increased sevices for handicapped children. The Egyptian government has played a major role in responding to this interest and demands, through various ministries such as Education, Social Affairs, Health, and Manpower. The passage of the Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Education no. (156) in September of 1969 marshal support for handicapped individuals.

According to this decision, Article No (1) defines handicapped children, the various categories and the major objectives of schools and classes for Special Education. "Handicapped pupils are defined as those having sensory, mental, or physical impairments, and cannot pursue their education in

ordinary schools. The purpose of these Special Education schools is to provide educational, social, health, and psychological services to the handicapped at different educational levels. These schools are determined and established through the Ministry of Education and divided into the following categories Visual, Hearing, and Mental Retardation. The Ministerial Decision (#159) addresses such issues as screening, selection process, enrollment of, curricula for, evaluation of, teacher education pupil programs, management and research in the area of Special Education.

The estimated number of disabled people in Egypt appears to be higher than that of developed countries. Although reliable statistical evidence concerning the number of disabled in Egypt is not well established, it appears that as much as eight percent of the current population (36 million)(1976 census) are disabled which is probably an underestimation. The responsibility for the education of and caring for the disabled is divided between a number of ministries which include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Manpower.

The Ministry of Education, through the Ministerial Decision of 1969 is mainly concerned with the education of three major categories of handicapped children and youth (Blind and Partially Sighted, Deaf and Partially Deaf, Mentally Retarded Children).

The Light Schools are designed for the blind and partially sighted students. These schools have the responsibility for educating Blind and Partially Sighted Children in the Egyptian ducational system. Primary and preparatory and 3 years for secondary education) throughout university education. The schooling consists of six years of elementary, three years of

preparatory, and three years at the secondary level (ages 15 to 18). Besides Cairo and Alexandria, every Governorate (24) has a minimum of one school for the blind and another for the partially sighted for the children between the ages of 6-8 years. The Ministry of Education provides limited vocational rehabilitation training for this category of impairment through vocational preparatory schools of 3 years after primary education.

Hope Schools are for the deaf and partially deaf (hard of hearing). The Deaf (Hope) Schools admit children between the age of 5 to 7 years whose hearing is between 120-70 db in the best ear and are of average intelligence. Schools for the partial deaf or hard of hearing serve children who have a hearing impairment between 70-50 db are of average intelligence and have developed a vocabulary to cope with an educational program. There are a total of 30 Hope Schools throughout Egypt which provides for 8 years of services schooling for 8 years and 25 preparatory (vocational) schools which provide 3 years of service. There are no secondary education for the deaf and the partially sighted.

Schools for Intellectural Education. Mentally retarded children, between 6-12 years of age, with I.Q. between 50-70 are served in this education setting. The elementary stage continues for 8 years, then follow by a vocational preparatory stage for another 3 years. There are no programs for children whose IQ is below 50. There are no programs at the secondary level for MR youth.

The Ministry of Education had developed an elaborate program (1985-86) for the improvement of Special Education at the Basic Education level in Egypt (grades one through six) with the Academy of Educational Development of the United States Government (Work Order No. 7).

The role of Ministry of Social Affairs, is to offer rehabilitation services to all disabled persons in Egypt, according to the Public Law of 1975 for Rehabilitation. These services are implemented by different agencies.

Rehabilitation Offices: There are 51 of these offices distributed throughout Egypt, Rehabilitation officers provide basic rehabilitation services for any case referred to them including medical, social, and vocational evaluation, provision of mobility aids, prosthetic and orthotic appliances as well as vocational training. Each individual case is monitored until final placement is achieved. The rehabilitation offices are usually locally based within a community but their staff can refer any case for specialized care and/or further treatment.

Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers: There are 35 of these centers throughout Egypt which concentrate their efforts toward such handicapping conditions as mental retardation, deafness, visual impairment blindness, and physical disability.

Sheltered workshops: The sheltered workshop provides training for severely physically disabled, convalescent tuberculosis cases and leprotics.

Private Organizations: Three are about 10 of these organizations working to promote the betterment of the disabled. Some of these are WAFA-ELAMAC Society, Happy Childhood Society, Society for The Future, which are in the private sector and

provides the handicapped person with such services as research. The Ministry of Social Affairs has had an elaborate program for Rehabilitation Research, which began in 1962 with the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare of the United States Government and the National Institute for Rehabilitation Research in Washington, D.C. Currently, there are more than 25 research programs and projects. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs supervises various sport programs for the disabled individual. The Ministry of Health is responsible for primary health care throughout the country which includes preventive measures, immunization. The employment of handicapped falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of manpower.

Egypt, in 1975, passed the Rehabilitation Act which mandated that five percent of any work force (company, industry) must consist of handicapped individuals. In order to be considered employable, a handicapped person must have received a Rehabilitation Certificate which indicates that he/she is ready to work.

Assessment practices regarding the identification of special needs students are usually based on out-of-date tests and unsound policies. For instance, the Ministry of Social Affairs conducted a recent survey (1986) in order to determine the most poular assessment instrument used by psychologists working in the centers. The results of the survey indicated that the seven most popular psychological tests in use were:

(1) Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale; (2) Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale; (3) Goodenogh Draw-a-Man Test; (4) Pictorial Test of Intelligence; (5) Sequin Form Board; (6) Porteus Maze Test; (7) Non-verbal Intelligence Test; (8) Wechsler Intelligence Scale

for Children; (9) Vineland Social Maturity Scale; (10) Thematic Apperception Test; and (11) House-Tree-Person Person.

Institution of Teacher Education: These teacher's training or schooling consists of six years at the elementary level and three years of Preparatory School (like a junior high). Advancement at the end of the Preparatory School, is dependent on achievement (grades). The higher a student's grades, the more likely he/she will go to a Secondary School if the grade or degree is somewhat lower than usual, the student will elect go to to a Technical School (such as Agriculture or Commerce) for three years or they can attend an Institute of Teacher Education for five years. The prospective Special Education teacher at the Elementary level after completing the required studies at the Institute of Teacher Education, must complete an additional year's study which focuses entirely on Special Education couses. However, this teacher must select one of the three categories of impairment for specialization. Upon completion of this program, he/she receives a Diploma in Special Education. Secondary levels special education teachers must complete the following pattern of educational training, six years of elementary, three years at preparatory, three at secondary, four years at a university which has a Faculty of Education and then one year of Special Education Training. Upon completion of these requirements, he/she receives a Special Diploma in Special Education and are eligible to teach within their one area of certification at the Secondary Level. The majority of course work is purely memorization with litle emphasis on applied or field work. In addition, little attention is directed toward a generic or specific teaching strategies. Higher technology (micro-computers, electronic aids, computer managed instruction,

speed tape players, portable communiation aids) has yet to emerge in the area of instruction. The student teaching experience is a very brief period consisting of limited classroom exposure with little or no designed purpose. A special education teacher's positions in Egypt is generally viewed as a less than desirable position not only from an economically but also socially. The practice of tracking lower achieving students into a special education teacher education program is a less than desirable criteria for determining who teaches the handicapped children and youth of Egypt.

Present Status vs Future Expectation

Egypt within the past ten years has made tremendous progress in providing services for its hadicapped population. This is especially true in light of Egypt's economy, its rural area, and the fact that Egypt is still conisidered as a developing country. However, there are many problems which still need to be addressed and changes need to occur.

Egypt's Special Education teacher selection process is woefully inadequate and the criteria for pushing low achieving students into the teaching profession will serve only to compound the problem of poorly prepared teachers who are perceived as having "a low teacher (work) position" in the educational employment work force. In addition, the field is essentially made up of females. This is probably due to the economic and social status associated with teachers of handiapped children and youth.

Screening and Assessment

Egypt currently teaches an effective sceening identification

and assessment model or process for identfying exceptional children. Pre-school assessment procedures are totally absent and the existing system of identifying exceptional children is antiquated relying on outdated instruments which usually have invalid norms. Emphasis is still placed solely on the IQ and the clinical aspect of testing. Absence is the theme of assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning. The leading educators of Egypt need to reinforce the basic theme that assessment (screening & diagnosis) is the process of gathering information from a variety of evaluation processes or procedures and making sound decisions concerning placement, services, programs and evaluations concerning an individuals handicapping condition and his/her schooling. This method would allow educators to look within the individual for areas of strengths and weaknesses to provide directions for their work with the student, correct assessment procedures, and would bridge the gap between identificatin and intervention. Egypt should also begin to develop appropriate instruments which can be used for early identification of pre-school children suspected of being developmentally delayed.

Instruction and Curriculum

Handicapped children by their general nature, exhibit a much larger range of behaviors than the non-handicapped. These children are called handicapped because their behaviors are different from the "normal child". With this in mind, we should realize that no single method, no style of education, no single grouping arrangement or no one set of materials can be suitable for all. Teachers must use a wide variety of teaching techniques, philosophies and environments to teach exceptional learners. In

addition, the techniques and materials used to teach a mentally retarded child are quite different from those used to teach a deaf child. In Egypt, these considerations many times are not taken into account when teaching exceptional children. The curriculum used for all children (normals) is usually watered down "and applied to the exceptional learner. In other words, individuals handicapping conditions, learner's characteristics, developmental level of the child, and his or her special needs are not taken into consideration when planning instructional activites and in direct teaching-ecucational planning, activities, and a differential curriculum are lacking for different categories of handicapping conditions. In addition, materials, resources, and teacher and instuctional aids are often insufficient and inappropriate. Teacher training institute should begin to introduce their students early in their educational career to children who have various handicapping conditions. Also, students also need to have more practical experiences in their teacher education training -- programs such as practicums, field trips, and longer student teacher experiences. Faculty of the Institutes of Education should begin to emphasize the level of severity of a handicap is as important as the type of handicap in planning instructions strategies and placement for handicapped children. Teachers need to understand this important principle in matching instruction to a child's characteristics (which is often dependent on the age of the student). The younger the student, emphasis is often placed on developmental, whereas the student emphasis is often placed on basic academic and social skills.

Reflection

Egypt has made great strides in the past ten years regarding the education of and care for exceptional children and youth. However, areas of educational reform regarding the education and rehabilitation of handicapped individuals which are solely neglected. For instance, there are no services for the severely emotionally disturbed child. Adult services are another area of neglect. Egypt does not have a category known as learning disabled which is probably a blessing. Services to pre-school handicapped children are virtually nonexistent and services which are available come from the private sector and are costly. Services for handicapped individuals are divided and provided through different ministry which even further reduces actual delivery of services. Joint efforts are needed between all ministries in order to provide for and educate individuals who have special needs. Attempts have been made at mainstreaming handicapped children in the regular schools and have been promising. However, parents and teachers of exceptional children in Egypt have experienced similar problems as to those experienced by teachers and parents in the United States, in that by merely placing the handicapped in the same educational setting acceptance, social awareness, expectations, and attitude changes have been much slower to change, and in fact resistance has often occurred. Social, political and economic factors will continue to affect what happens in Egypt regarding Special Education.